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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
9-13 May 1991

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE AFRICAN CHARTER FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

M91-549

I. BACKGROUND AND MANDATE OF THE CHARTER

1. The crisis that engulfed the African continent in the 1980s was not only an economic crisis but also a human, legal, political and social crisis. In the wake of such a crisis, suffering, hardship and impoverishment of the vast majority of African people increased at an alarming rate. At the same time, the political situation in Africa was characterized by an over-centralized power structure which further impeded the participation of the vast majority of the population in social, political and economic development. With such a dismal picture, ECA, with collaborative efforts from the African peoples' organizations, African Governments, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, organized an International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in February 1990.

2. The ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic Development and Planning, at its twenty-fourth session, adopted resolution 664 (XXIV) which supported convening a conference on popular participation and urged African Governments to actively participate in it. The Conference was organized under the auspices of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Follow-up on the Implementation of the UN-PAAERD at the regional level (UN-IATF) and with the full support of the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania.

3. The Conference was the third in a series of international conferences organized by ECA in collaboration with other United Nations agencies in contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD). It followed the Abuja International Conference on Africa: The Challenge of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development, held in 1987, and the 1988 Khartoum International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development.

4. With the theme of "putting the people first", the objectives of the Conference were to: 2/

(a) Recognize the role of peoples' participation in Africa's recovery and development efforts;

(b) Sensitize national governments and the international community to the dimensions, dynamics, processes and potential of a development approach rooted in popular initiatives and self-reliant efforts;

(c) Identify obstacles to people's participation in development and define appropriate approaches to the promotion of popular participation in policy formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes;

(d) Recommend actions to be taken by governments, the United Nations system and donor agencies in building an enabling environment for the authentic popular participation in the development process and encourage people and their organizations to undertake self-reliant development initiatives;

(e) Facilitate the exchange of information, experience and knowledge for mutual support among people and their organizations; and

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1/ ECA, E/ECA/CM.16/11, African Charter for Popular Participation, International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 12-16 February, 1990, p. 17.

2/ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

(f) Propose indicators for monitoring progress in facilitating people's participation in Africa's development.

5. The Conference defined popular participation as

> ... the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interest of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits. Therefore, there must be an opening up of political process to accommodate freedom of opinions, tolerate differences, accept consensus on issues as well as to ensure the effective participation of the people and their organizations and associations.

It affirmed that nations cannot be built without the popular support and participation of the people, nor can the economic crisis be resolved and the human and economic conditions improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people. The concept of development from below was, once again brought to the fore of development issues at the Conference.

6. Human-centred development which ensures the overall well-being of the people through sustained improvement in their living standards and the full and effective participation of the people in determining their development policies, programmes and processes and contributing to their realization were emphasized. The marginalization and subordination of Africa in world affairs, both geo-politically and economically, was deplored by the Conference.

7. To graduate from the inherent economic crises which characterize Africa, the Conference urged African Governments and policy-makers to urgently embark upon the task of transforming the structure of the national economies to achieve long-term self-sustained growth and development that is both human-centred and participatory in nature. The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) was endorsed by the Conference as a blue-print for transforming African economies to attain long-term self-sustaining economic growth and development.

8. The mandate for the Charter for Popular Participation revolves around resolution 691 (XXV) of the ECA Conference of Ministers which adopted and endorsed the Charter. The ECA Conference of Ministers further asked the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to submit the Charter to the twenty-sixth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU and to the forty-fifth regular session of the General Assembly.

9. The Charter was adopted by the OAU Council of Ministers in July 1990 in resolution CM/RES/1286(LII) and was subsequently endorsed by the Summit of Heads of State and Government in its Declaration. The resolution adopted the Charter as a

> statement of the strategy that should be incorporated in development policies adopted by African Governments with a view to promoting popular participation in development and by encouraging people and their organizations to undertake self-reliant development initiatives.

The resolution further requested the Secretary-General of the OAU and the Executive Secretary of ECA to set up a mechanism for implementing and monitoring the follow-up activities.

10. The General Assembly in resolution 45/178 (C) took note with appreciation of the Charter; commended the collective commitment of African peoples and Governments to promote economic recovery and development in Africa through, inter alia, popular participation for development and transformation; and

called upon the international community to increase support to Africa's efforts in bringing about sustained and sustainable growth and development taking into account, inter alia, the objectives of the Charter.

11. The full texts of the above resolutions and Declaration of the African Heads of State and Government of the OAU are given in the annex.

II. IMPLEMENTING THE CHARTER

12. In accordance with paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Charter, monitoring of its implementation at the Africa regional level will be done by ECA and the OAU through the Regional Advisory Group (RAG). RAG will be submitting biennial progress reports on the implementation of the Charter to the ECA Conference of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU. In addition to ECA and the OAU, representatives of governments, trade unions, women's organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), voluntary development organizations (VDOs) and grass-roots, youth and student organizations will form part of RAG. The establishment of RAG will, therefore, require the blessing of all these bodies.

13. At the national level, it is envisaged that implementation of the Charter will monitored through national conferences, such as the one recently held in Arusha from 3 to 8 March 1991. Through such national conferences, grass-roots peoples organizations can network and exchange ideas and experiences on the progress and problems encountered in implementing the Charter. Such a follow-up mechanism would allow representatives of governments, trade unions, women's organizations, NGOs, VDOs, grass-roots and youth and student organizations to exchange their experiences and share ideas.

14. In addition, ECA is setting up a "focal point" project to facilitate the implementation of the Charter. The project will be based in the Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division. In collaboration with NGO networks, trade unions, VDOs, peoples organizations and African Governments, the project will assist in organizing meetings, with the objective of creating national consultative mechanisms to foster the participation of people and their organizations in the planning and implementation of national development strategies. It will thus support initiatives which strengthen and encourage the building of independent and democratic networks of NGOs and grass-roots organizations throughout Africa.

15. The project will also publish a newsletter and investigate the possibilities for electronic communication links so as to document grass-root experiences and initiatives in the development process and as a way of enhancing human resources development and technical cooperation at the grass-roots level.

16. Further, the project will prepare studies on issues concerned with building an enabling environment for the growth of popular participation.

17. On another front, ECA, through the Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division, is trying to establish another project "Promoting popular participation in development in Africa: With special emphasis on environment and sustainable development". This project is scheduled to last for two years. The long-term objective of the project is to promote sustainable development in two African countries through environmentally sound development planning. The main activity of the project will, therefore, be the promotion of environmental management for sustainable development through popular participation.

18. The main objectives of the project, briefly, are as follows:

(a) Building the capacity of the grass-roots and people's organizations to understand environmental issues and the environmental impact of development activities;

(b) Enable the people and their organizations to interact with the government on environmental matters;

(c) Strengthen the capacity of people's organizations to mount public information campaigns, monitor environmental developments and issues and to contribute to policies and plans as related to the environment;

(d) Provide expertise and documentation on relevant environmental issues; and

(e) Assist people's organizations in the two countries to cooperate and exchange information on aspects related to environment and development.

III. CONCLUSION

19. ECA considers the initiatives outlined above as essential in monitoring and implementing the Charter. But like any new idea, the concept of popular participation, if it is ever going to be a permanent feature of development planning in Africa, has to be embraced and supported by African Governments, trade unions, NGOs, peoples' organizations, etc. The economic and social turmoil which characterize Africa at the moment can only be reversed if the concept of popular participation and its central theme of human-centred development are adopted by development planners, politicians, NGOs, grass-roots organizations and the like. It is not too late to reverse Africa's fortunes.

Annex

RESOLUTIONS RELATING TO THE CHARTER FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION

Resolution 691 (XXV). THE AFRICAN CHARTER FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The ECA Conference of Ministers,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution S-13/2 on the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD),

Recalling also resolution 664 (XXIV) of the twenty-fourth session of the Commission and fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers on the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa,

Aware of the fact that people have a fundamental right to participate fully in the making of policy decisions which affect their lives at all levels,

Noting with interest the decisions and recommendations arrived at by the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, held from 12 to 16 February 1990 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, and in particular resolution 2 of the same name whose operative paragraphs resolve, inter alia, that the eleventh day of February each year should be proclaimed Popular Participation Day in Africa,

1. Expresses its appreciation to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for generously hosting the Conference;

2. Adopts the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha 1990) as a statement of the strategy that should be incorporated in development policies adopted by African Governments with a view to promoting popular participation in development and by encouraging people and their organizations to undertake self-reliant development initiatives;

3. Recommends that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania should submit the present Charter to the forty-fifth regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the fifty-second session of the Council of Ministers of the OAU and twenty-sixth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU;

4. Requests the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity to disseminate the contents of the Charter widely, and to set up a mechanism for implementing and monitoring the follow up of activities contained in the Charter at sub-regional and regional levels and submit regular annual reports to the ECA Conference of Ministers and the appropriate organs of the Organization of African Unity.

Resolution CM/Res.1286(L11) RESOLUTION ON THE AFRICAN CHARTER FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION 3/

The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in its 52nd Ordinary Session, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 3 to 7 July 1990,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution S-13/2 on the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD),

Recalling also resolution 664 (XXIV) of the twenty-fourth session of the Commission and fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers on the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa,

Aware of the fact that people have a fundamental right to participate fully in the making of policy decisions which affect their lives at all levels,

Noting with interest the decision and recommendations arrived at by the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, held from 12 to 16 February 1990 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, and in particular resolution 2 of the same name whose operative paragraphs resolve, inter alia, that the eleventh day of February each year should be proclaimed Popular Participation Day in Africa:

1. EXPRESSES its appreciation to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for generously hosting the Conference;

2. ADOPTS the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha 1990) as a statement of the strategy that should be incorporated in development policies adopted by African Governments with a view to promoting popular participation in development and by encouraging people and their organizations to undertake self-reliant development initiatives;

3. RECOMMENDS that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania should submit the present Charter to the forty-fifth regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations for its information and necessary action;

4. REQUESTS the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the Executive Secretary of ECA to disseminate the contents of the Charter widely, and to set up a mechanism for implementing and monitoring the follow-up of activities contained in the Charter at subregional and regional levels and submit regular annual reports to the Council.

3/ Ghana and Gabon entered reservations on this resolution.

DECLARATION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY ON THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA AND THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE WORLD

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting at the Twenty-sixth Ordinary Session of our Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 9 - 11 July 1990, have undertaken a critical review of the political, social and economic situation of our continent in the light of the rapid changes taking place in the world and their impact on Africa as presented in the Report of the Secretary General on the fundamental changes taking place in the world and their implications for Africa: Proposals for an African Response.

2. In particular, we have noted the changing East-West relations from confrontation to cooperation, the socio-economic and political changes in Eastern Europe, the steady move towards political and monetary union of Western Europe, the increasing global tendency towards regional integration and the establishment of trading and economic blocs as well as the advances in science and technology. These we found constitute major factors which should guide Africa's collective thinking about the challenges and options before her in the 1990s and beyond in view of the real threat of marginalization of our continent.

3. We noted with satisfaction, the achievements of Africa in the struggle for the decolonization of the continent and in the fight against racism and apartheid; as well as the positive role played by the OAU in this respect. The independence of Namibia has pushed further Africa's frontiers of freedom.

4. We took note of the measures taken by Mr. de Klerk which provide ground for optimism. We caution however, that these changes fall far short of our common objective of totally dismantling Apartheid. Unless and until the Racist Minority Government is irreversibly committed to the eradication of this anachronistic system, the International Community must continue to exert all forms of pressure including in particular, economic sanctions against South Africa. This, our collective view, is also the demand of the National Liberation Movements of that country. We wish at the same time to reaffirm our solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa and to assure them of our undivided support at this crucial phase in their struggle. At the same time, we urge them to close their ranks and unite their forces.

5. The socio-economic situation in our continent remains precarious today despite the many efforts made by our countries, individually and collectively. At our Second Extra-ordinary Assembly in Lagos - Nigeria in April 1980, we adopted the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa up to the year 2000 and the Final Act of Lagos. At the Twenty-first Ordinary Session of our Assembly held here in Addis Ababa in July 1985, we also adopted the Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986 - 1990. Equally, in the face of the excruciating external debt burden, we convened the Third Extra-ordinary Session of our Assembly and adopted the African Common Position on Africa's External Debt Crisis. In all these endeavours, we were guided by the principle of collective self-reliance and self-sustaining development.

6. These represented our collective attempt to institute measures to arrest and reverse the steady decline in Africa's economic performance. Despite these attempts and strong political commitment to them, it has not so far been possible to achieve our objective of laying a firm foundation for self-sustained development of our countries. On the contrary, throughout the decade of the 1980s most of our productive and infrastructural facilities continued to deteriorate. The per capita incomes of our peoples fell drastically and so did the volumes of our exports as well as imports. There has been sharp decline in the quality of life in our countries as spending on public health, housing and education and other social services had to be severely curtailed. Food production has also fallen in proportion to the expanding population. All this contrasted sharply with the alarming rise in Africa's external debt stock which shot up from about 50 billion

US Dollars in 1980 to about 257 billion US Dollars by the end of 1989. As a result of this combination of acute economic problems and external indebtedness, the number of African Member States classified as least developed rose from 21 to 28 during the same period.

7. Our countries have made serious efforts to cope with the most adverse consequences of this difficult economic situation. Most of our countries have entered into structural adjustment programmes with the international financial and monetary institutions - mostly at heavy political and social costs. But we realize that these are short term measures and are by themselves insufficient to completely restore our economies to sound footing and lay firm foundation for future growth. We are very much concerned that, in addition to these problems, there is an increasing tendency to impose conditionalities of a political nature for assistance to Africa.

8. We reaffirm that Africa's development is the responsibility of our governments and peoples. We are now more than before determined to lay a solid foundation for self-reliant, human-centred and sustainable development on the basis of social justice and collective self-reliance so as to achieve accelerated structural transformation of our economies. Within this context we are determined to work assiduously towards economic integration through regional cooperation. We are also determined to take urgent measures to rationalize the existing economic groupings in our continent in order to increase their effectiveness in promoting economic integration and establishing an African Economic Community.

9. These are objectives we set for ourselves in Lagos in 1980. We reaffirm their continued validity as well as the fundamental principles of the Lagos Plan of Action and Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, including the sectoral priorities contained in them in particular , the urgent need to attain self-sufficiency in food production, to promote science and technology for development and to establish a viable industrial base on the continent. In this context, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of sound population and environmental policies conducive to economic growth and development of our continent.

10. We are fully aware that in order to facilitate this process of socio-economic transformation and integration, it is necessary to promote popular participation of our peoples in the processes of government and development. A political environment which guarantees human rights and the observance of the rule of law, would assure high standards of probity and accountability particularly on the part of those who hold public office. In addition, popular-based political processes would ensure the involvement of all including, in particular, women and youth in the development efforts. We accordingly recommit ourselves to the further democratization of our societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in our countries. We reaffirm the right of our countries to determine, in all sovereignty, their system of democracy on the basis of their socio-cultural values, taking into account the realities of each of our countries and the necessity to ensure development and satisfy the basic needs of our peoples. We therefore assert that democracy and development should go together and should be mutually reinforcing.

11. We realize at the same time that the possibilities of achieving the objectives we have set will be constrained as long as an atmosphere of lasting peace and stability does not prevail in Africa. We therefore renew our determination to work together towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all the conflicts on our continent. The resolution of conflicts will be conducive to the creation of peace and stability in the continent and will also have the effect of reducing expenditures on defence and security thus releasing additional resources for socio-economic development. We are equally determined to make renewed efforts to eradicate the root causes of the refugee problem. It is only through the creation of stable conditions that Africa can fully harness its human and material resources and direct them to development.

12. At this crucial juncture when our continent is emerging with difficulty from a phase in its history that focused mainly on political liberation and nation building, and is about to embark on a new era laying greater emphasis on economic development, we need to strengthen the Organization of African Unity so that it may also become a viable instrument in the service of Africa's economic development and integration.

Consistent with this goal, we rededicate ourselves to the principles and objectives enshrined in its Charter; to our faith in ourselves and to our continent, with greater determination to be masters of our destiny. In this spirit, we reaffirm our commitment to revive the ideals of Pan-Africanism and commit ourselves, individually and collectively, on behalf of our governments and peoples to maintain and strengthen our unity and solidarity and to pool our resources and wisdom in order to face the challenges of the decade of the 1990s and beyond, change the bleak socio-economic prospects of our continent and guarantee a better life for all peoples and future generations yet unborn. These objectives are well within our capabilities. We, therefore, pledge to apply ourselves fully to the achievement of these objectives.

13. The achievement of these objectives will also require international cooperation and solidarity, as well as fundamental changes in the international economic system. The continuing plummeting of the prices of Africa's commodities, skyrocketing of prices of manufactured goods and the growing burden of external debt and the attendant reverse flow of resources constitute external factors which severely constrain our efforts for economic recovery. The developed countries bear a major responsibility for the transformation of the present inequitable international system. On our part, we will continue to strive for the establishment of a just and equitable international economic system. In this connection, a revitalized Non-Aligned Movement can play a decisive role.

14. We recommit ourselves to strengthen the South-South Cooperation and to play a lead role in this regard. We also wish to express our readiness to work in concert with other countries and regions of the developing world to reactivate North-South dialogue and cooperation. We do believe that an increasingly interdependent world calls for greater international solidarity and that peace and prosperity should be shared for the common good of humanity.

15. We request the Secretary General to monitor the implementation of this declaration and to take all necessary actions in this respect in collaboration with the ECA, ADB and other African and International Institutions. We also request him to ensure the widest possible dissemination of this declaration and to sensitize African public opinion and the International Community on its content.

Addis Ababa - Ethiopia
11 July 1990

Resolution 45/178 (C) AFRICAN CHARTER FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions S-13/2 of 1 June 1986 on the critical economic situation in Africa, the annex to which contains the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, 43/12 of 25 October 1988, 43/27 of 18 November 1988 on mid-term review and appraisal of the Programme of Action and 44/24 of 17 November 1989 on the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation, which, inter alia, called for popular participation in the activities for growth and development.

Noting with interest the concepts contained in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, 4/ the importance of which has been recognized in international conferences,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation; 5/

2. Commends the collective commitment of African peoples and Governments to promote economic recovery and development in Africa through, inter alia, popular participation for development and transformation;

3. Calls upon the international community to increase support to Africa's efforts in bringing about sustained and sustainable growth and development taking into account, inter alia, the objectives of the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation.

4/ A/44/315, annex.

5/ Ibid.